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Taku River Tlingit First Nation

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2008AL0009-000414
March 26, 2008

Ministry of Agriculture and Lands
Integrated Land Management Bureau
Taku River Tlingit First Nation

B.C., TAKU RIVER TLINGIT BUILD PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY

ATLIN – The Province and the Taku River Tlingit First Nation are working together to create a plan for sustainable use of natural resources in northwestern B.C. and have signed a framework agreement to solidify their commitment, Agriculture and Lands Minister Pat Bell and Taku River Tlingit First Nation spokesperson Sandra Jack announced today.

"Ratification of this agreement marks a major milestone in the development of the Province's partnership with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation," said Bell. "Today's announcement is truly a historic achievement because land-use agreements have never been undertaken for this area of the province. The agreement signed today ensures that land-use decisions in the region will be implemented in a sustainable and collaborative manner."

"The Taku River Tlingit First Nation fully embraces the framework agreement," said Jack. "This government-to-government opportunity will result in collaborative decision-making processes concerning land use and wildlife management affecting Tlingit values across our traditional territory."

The area subject to the agreement will cover three million hectares and includes the traditional territories of the Tahltan Nation and Dakh Ka First Nations – Carcross Tagish First Nation and Teslin Tlingit Council.

"On behalf of the First Nations Summit, I offer congratulations to the Taku River Tlingit First Nation's past and present leadership and to community members for their commitment to protecting the land and resources in their traditional territory," said Dave Porter, a member of the political executive of the First Nations Summit. "This agreement is a result of their unwavering determination to protect their Aboriginal rights and title, be it in the highest court in Canada or through negotiations. It clearly demonstrates the Taku River Tlingit First Nation's strong commitment to sustainable development."

"This is truly a success story," said Rose Anne Anttila, chair of the Atlin Advisory Planning Commission. "The community of Atlin supports the framework agreement, and is pleased that the Province and TRTFN have included a representative of the community as a participant in the joint land forum. We will work with the TRTFN and the Province to plan for how we can develop our resources, improve the local economy, and do it in a sustainable manner."

The agreement includes the creation of a joint land forum made up of representatives from the Province and the Taku River Tlingit First Nation. The forum will undertake:

- A land-use agreement focusing on sustainable resource development issues related to mineral development, wildlife, ecosystems and cultural sustainability;
- Collaborative fish and wildlife management planning, which includes completion of a local wildlife management plan with the TRTFN; and
- Developing processes for shared decision making to implement the land-use agreement and collaborative fish and wildlife management plan.

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Based on community and stakeholder consultations carried out by the Province and the TRTFN between July 2007 and January 2008, one representative from the community of Atlin will take part in the forum. Other stakeholders will be invited to participate in the development of the land-use agreement through a public involvement strategy that is being developed to support the process.

The Province and TRTFN have agreed that the desired long-term outcomes from these projects will include:

- A reduction in conflicts between the parties;
- More efficient and effective operational decision making processes;
- Long-term sustainability of culturally significant areas;
- Healthy wildlife populations and sound habitat management; and
- Improved employment opportunities.

Through the negotiation of this framework agreement, and other joint initiatives, the TRTFN and the Province are already finding ways to promote responsible development in the region. When the Ruby Creek Mine near Atlin received its environmental assessment certificate in September 2007, the Province and the TRTFN agreed on a series of initiatives to enhance project sustainability; some of those initiatives will be delivered through this framework agreement.

Following the signing of this agreement, the parties will initiate the land-use agreement process. For more information on the proposed stakeholder and community involvement, a map of the area and copy of the agreement strategy visit the ILMB website at http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/lup/.

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